

# High-level meeting continues to bring Georgia and the European Union closer together

With discussions taking place across the whole spectrum of EU-Georgia relations, the European Commission and the Government of Georgia have agreed to further solidify and enhance cooperation, notably through a series of concrete actions.

*“Today is another very special milestone in our partnership”, said President Jean-Claude **Juncker**. “Georgia is a proud country, built on the courage and ambition of its people. Georgia’s commitment and desire to step-up its cooperation with the European Union shows that our relationship is a priority; today, we have agreed on many ways in which we as the European Commission can return this commitment, in concrete terms. The more Georgia reforms, the more we will support. You can count on the European Union to believe in Georgia’s future, and to firmly defend its territorial integrity.”*

The full remarks of President **Juncker** at the press conference with Prime Minister Bakhtadze will be available online.

*“The relationship that the European Union and Georgia have built is undoubtedly strong; among the strongest and most comprehensive we have with any partner”, said the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica **Mogherini**. “Our Association Agreement is bringing tangible benefits to Georgian and EU citizens alike and gives us a framework to cooperate even more closely. Whether it is enhancing Georgia’s resilience to hybrid threats, providing support and facilitating access to finance for small and medium enterprises, investing in transport infrastructure, or giving young Georgians more opportunities to come to Europe, either to study or travel, we are determined to continue to deliver concrete, positive results.”*

*“Today, the European Union is Georgia’s number one trading partner, accounting for 27% of its total trade”, said Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**. “The European Union has helped 37,000 Georgian companies to receive loans since 2009, and has helped over 90,000 people have access to free legal services. These are just a few examples of the positive impact that our relationship is having on peoples’ lives. Today, we have taken steps to do even more together. The adoption of the [Annual Action Programme 2018 for Georgia](#), as part of the bilateral allocation amounting to €134 million, will further step up our support in the fields of public finance management, security and the rule of law, and energy efficiency among others”*

The European Union and Georgia have agreed to **more than 25 concrete actions** across three focus areas, which will advance cooperation within the framework of the Association Agreement. Here are [the key outcomes](#):

## **Economy, Trade and Connectivity**

### **€3.4 billion for 18 priority transport investment projects in Georgia**

As a key transit country between Europe and Asia, Georgia has a crucial role to play in trans-continental connectivity. The Indicative TEN-T Investment Action Plan identifies 18 priority projects across all transport modes – rail, road, port and airports – in order to improve the mobility of people, goods and services, bringing huge benefits to Georgia's economy, to be financed from public and private funds, leveraging funds from international financial institutions.

### **€45 million in Macro-Financial Assistance to support the Georgian economy**

In April 2018, the European Commission [approved the third package of Macro-Financial Assistance to Georgia](#). Roll-out of this €45 million programme will support Georgia's economic reforms, as well as its external financing needs, complementing Georgia's programme with the International Monetary Fund.

### **€27 million for enhanced energy efficiency**

With Georgia due to make important progress on key areas of its national energy efficiency legislation, the European Commission, together with the international financing institutions, will invest in the roll-out of energy efficiency standards in public buildings.

### **Supporting high-speed broadband in Georgia**

The European Union will continue to support Georgia to develop its high-speed broadband connections, particularly in rural areas, through the EU4Digital initiative, as well as to set up and develop its national broadband strategy, in cooperation with the World Bank.

### **Additional support for agriculture and rural development**

Following the [success of the cooperation to date](#), the EU will support the improvement of living conditions for the rural population in Georgia. In particular, the EU will target the improvement of export opportunities through approximation with EU standards, particularly in the food safety field.

### **€100 million of additional access to finance in local currency for SMEs**

Since 2009, the EU has supported access to finance for more than 63,000 small, medium and micro-sized enterprises in Georgia, with about €700 million lent to create jobs and increase exports. New programmes worth €100 million will further support access to finance in the local currency. The External Investment Plan Guarantee will allow new investment projects in Georgia.

In addition, Commissioner Johannes **Hahn** and Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani signed [a financing agreement](#) worth **€49 million** for the European

Union to support **economic and business development in Georgia**. Under the agreement, the European Union and Georgia will work together to develop a better legal system for business, modernise financial services, and innovate business models.

## **Education, research and innovation**

### **Developing the European School in Tbilisi**

The European School, [opened by Commissioner Hahn in September this year](#), welcomes students from all the Eastern Partnership countries. The European Union and Georgia will contribute financially and through expertise to the development of a specialised high school curriculum as well as to develop its new site.

### **€7.5 million for additional academic and scientific exchanges**

Since 2015 alone, over 2,500 students and academic staff have studied or taught in the EU as part of the Erasmus+ programme. The EU will give additional technical and financial support to Georgia to increase the number of students and scientific exchanges even further.

Commissioner **Hahn** and Foreign Minister Zalkaliani also signed a [financing agreement on skills development and matching for labour market needs](#), worth nearly **€48 million**. Starting in 2019, the EU will help to deliver lifelong learning skills, entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurship opportunities in four Georgian regions, including in Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia.

## **Justice and Internal Security**

### **Enhancing cooperation on disaster risk management and civil protection**

Following the [arrangement signed in July](#), the European Commission and Georgia will work even more closely on disaster prevention, preparedness and response on issues such as forest fires, floods, and search and rescue missions. Georgia will also gain access to the Commission's [Joint Research Centre's disaster risk management tools](#) and will continue to benefit from [Copernicus](#) information and products.

### **€27 million to increase the security of Georgian citizens**

The European Union will step up its contribution to good governance and the rule of law in Georgia through a new programme to prevent and fight against crime, improve civil protection, and enhance the oversight of the security sector.

### **Strengthening Georgia's cyber security**

The European Union will contribute to improving the cyber resilience and criminal justice response of Georgia and the other Eastern Partnership

countries.

### **Further Information**

[Key outcomes of the EU-Georgia high-level meeting factsheet](#)

[Full outcomes of the EU-Georgia high-level meeting](#)

Remarks by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker at the press conference with the Prime Minister of Georgia, Mamuka Bakhtadze

[EU-Georgia relations factsheet](#)

[Eastern Partnership 20 Deliverables for 2020 factsheet](#)

[European Union Delegation to Georgia website](#)